



Canyon Wrenderings

The Journal of the Black Canyon Audubon Society

Representing Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray and San Miguel Counties of Western Colorado

Winter 2013/2014

Volume XXVI Number 2

Mark Your Calendar

December

- *Saturday Dec. 14th*

Montrose Christmas Bird Count

Meet at 8:30 AM at the BLM office (2465 S Townsend, Montrose). For more information, contact Missy Siders at 970-240-5332 or msiders@blm.gov

- *Sunday Dec. 15th*

Gunnison Christmas Bird Count

Meet at 7:30 AM at Hurst Hall Room 130 at Western State Colorado Univ. campus. Potluck at 5:30 to compile results. For more information, contact Arden Anderson at 970-641-5322.

- *Saturday Dec. 21st*

Delta Christmas Bird Count

Meet at 8:00 AM at the Delta City Market parking lot. For more information, contact Amy Seglund at 970-252-6014 or amy.seglund@state.co.us

January

- *Saturday Jan. 4th*

Hotchkiss Christmas Bird Count

Meet at 8:00 AM at the Hotchkiss City Market parking lot. For more information and for those wishing to meet early to observe owls, contact Jason Beason at 970-310-5117 or jason.beason@rmbo.org.

February

- *Raptor Field Trips*

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS ARE COMING!

That exciting time of the year is rapidly approaching for Christmas Bird Counts in Western Colorado. As has been the case for many years, four counts take place in the area served by the Black Canyon Audubon Society. If you have taken part in Christmas Bird Counts in the past, you know how much fun they are. If you have thought about participating, but have been unsure about doing so, don't hesitate and come out for a great time. This is a wonderful way to meet others with similar interests, get to know the area better, and take part in a tradition that has provided excellent information about winter bird populations for over 100 years.

All you need is a pair of binoculars, warm clothes, a lunch, and an interest in birds! Experienced birders will be matched up with those with less experience, so the opportunity to learn and improve your skills should not be passed up. Count areas are 15-mile-diameter circles that are broken into many pieces so that they can be covered by several groups. A surprising number of different birds are found each year, and unusual sightings are often made of birds outside of their range or visiting from the far north.

Not only will you have fun beyond belief, Christmas Bird Counts are free! Information about the counts in our area is listed at the left. Once you have done one, you may be hooked and want to do them all!



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Comings and Goings

It has been a beautiful fall with plenty of migrating birds to keep our attention, and we are now moving into winter with cranes and geese overhead. Not only have many birds in our area moved south, so has one of our board members, who we wish could have stayed with us a bit longer. Barbara Hawke joined the board this past summer, but has now taken a job as the Director of the Arizona Wilderness Coalition in Tucson. Barbara is a very knowledgeable and helpful person who will be greatly missed in our area. She formerly had been employed by the Wilderness Society, Black Canyon Regional Land Trust, and Nature Conservancy and was serving on the Montrose Planning Commission, Interpretive Association of Western Colorado Board of Directors, the San Miguel Basin Gunnison Sage Grouse Working Group, and the Bureau of Land Management Resource Advisory Committee at the time of her departure. She left big shoes to fill, and our loss is Arizona's gain. We wish you well Barbara! As a result, we are on the lookout for someone to fill her position on the BCAS Board and the San Miguel Gunnison Sage Grouse Working Group would like someone to step into her position, as well.



Swordbill by
Paul Tickner

Barbara had hopes of taking on the Newsletter with the earlier departure of Amber Carver, who had been handling the duties. As a result, I have taken on this edition of the newsletter and hope that it comes close to the standards that have been set before. It has been a good learning experience and not as difficult to put together as one might expect, though the model I have had to work from has been good. I am also hoping it will be the only newsletter editor experience that I gain.

Speaking of board members, Alan Reed and Susan Chandler-Reed have rejoined the board to serve as coordinators for the upcoming Eckert Crane Days! This is greatly appreciated and we are glad to have the tradition continue.



Baobab trees and thorny scrub by
Pete Loncar

We have now enjoyed our third speaker program of the year. We were pleased with a turnout of about 55 people at Bill Heddles Recreation Center for a talk by Pete Loncar about the culture, animals, and birds of Madagascar on November 20. What a treat to hear about and see pictures of such a distant and unusual place. Thank you, Pete, for a wonderful presentation. Two months previous, we had another exciting presentation at Bill Heddles by Paul Tickner about birding in Ecuador that was equally well attended. Our first presentation of the year was by renowned birders and photographers, Coen Dexter and Brenda Wright, who told us about and showed us the beautiful bird life of Peru at a presentation in Montrose. Thank you all for the effort you have taken in bringing these wonderful places to us!

If you have had a wonderful adventure that you might be interested in presenting to a friendly and interested group, please let us know and we can make the arrangements.

Jon Horn

BCAS President

OFFICERS

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Geoff Tischbein	Montrose	249-5215	geofft@montrose.net

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<u>Programs</u> – OPEN		
<u>Newsletter Editor</u> – OPEN		
<u>Eckert Crane Days</u> – Alan & Susan Reed	249-1076	alan_reed@bresnan.net

Yellow-billed Cuckoo in the News



In October, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed listing the western population of the yellow-billed cuckoo as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The western yellow-billed cuckoo in Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, Oregon, and Washington is distinct from eastern populations and is in decline. It is a neotropical migrant that lives in riparian woodlands during the nesting season in western North America. More than 90 percent of the bird's riparian habitat in the West is estimated to have been lost or degraded. The USFWS was petitioned to add the western yellow-billed cuckoo to the federal list of threatened or endangered species in 1998; it was added to the candidate list in 2001.

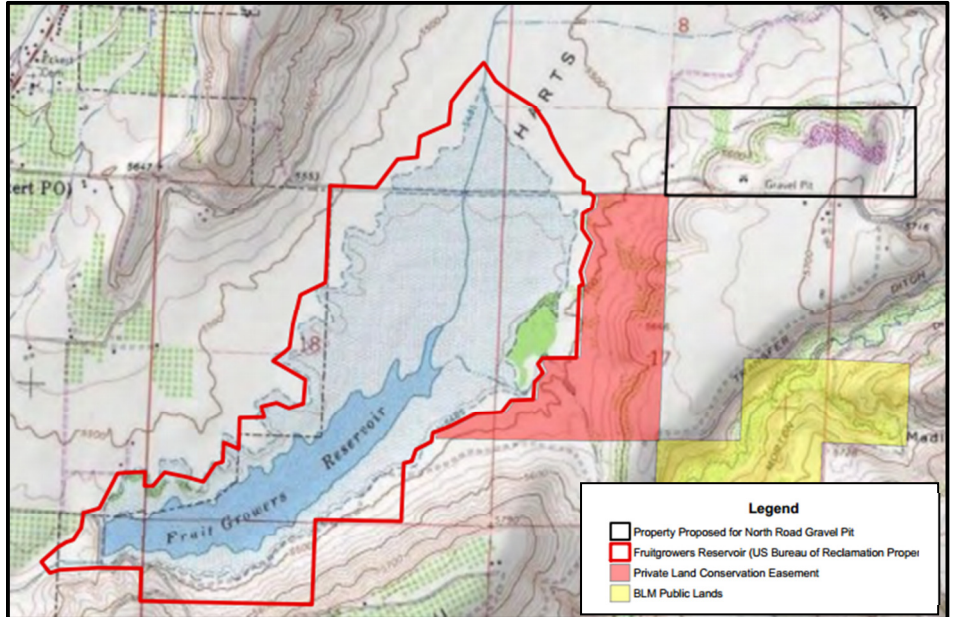
Comments on the proposal to list the western yellow-billed cuckoo as a threatened species will be accepted through December 2, 2013. Comments may be submitted online at www.regulations.gov. The Docket Number for the proposed listing rule is FWS-R8-ES-2013-0104. Comments can also be sent by mail to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R8-ES-2013-0104, Division of Policy and Directives Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042-PDM, Arlington, VA 22203.

Additional information can be found at: http://www.fws.gov/sacramento/outreach/Public-Advisories/WesternYellow-BilledCuckoo/outreach_PA_Western-Yellow-Billed-Cuckoo.htm

Gravel Pit! An Example of Proactive Interaction and Positive Outcomes

by Jon Horn

It was the phone call that I never wanted to receive: Delta County was contemplating the purchase of 120 acres for a new gravel pit (North Road Gravel Pit), and it was near Fruitgrowers Reservoir—a designated Important Bird Area, the place where thousands of cranes stop annually on their spring migration through our area, an important stopover place for other migratory birds, a rare nesting habitat for other birds, and a regionally favorite bird watching spot. The call had come from Robbie LeValley, Delta County Administrator, and she was requesting a meeting with members of the BCAS Board. The meeting was arranged for October 1. Prior to the meeting, we knew the location of the proposed gravel pit—a block of land about 0.5 miles east of the reservoir along North Road—but little else. In addition to the BCAS Board, I invited Chris Lazo, former BCAS board member, revitalizer of Eckert Crane Days, and current board member of the Audubon Colorado Council; Evelyn Horn, local crane expert from Eckert; and Jason Beason, Coordinator with the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory in Paonia, to attend as well. On the appointed day, BCAS Board Members Robin Nicholoff, Elaine Probasco, and I, along with Evelyn Horn and Chris Lazo (Jason Beason was unable to attend due to a prior commitment) met with Robbie LeValley, other Delta County staff: Bob Kalenak (County Engineer), Dave Rice (Senior Planner), and Larry Record and Dan Sickles (Road and Bridge), and their project consultants: Mike Ripp (MVR Resources; aggregate mining) and Steve Boyle (BIO-Logic, Inc.). Boyle had done the environmental assessment of the parcel and is recognized as an even-handed and objective professional in his field.



Important information conveyed to us included that a portion of the proposed pit location was a former gravel pit that was never reclaimed, and another portion of the proposed area was formerly farmed, but is now weedy and not particularly attractive to birds. The pit will be a dry pit, in that it lies above the existing water table, and groundwater infiltration will not be a factor. The existing Antelope Hill gravel pit, about 1 mile south of Fruitgrowers Reservoir, currently uses North Road across the causeway at Fruitgrowers Reservoir as one of the routes used to haul gravel, and the new pit will increase the amount of gravel-hauling traffic somewhat. It was also made clear that the County will need to comply with State regulations already in place

regarding dust and water, and their permit from the State will include reclamation requirements that have the intent that reclamation is properly carried out and successful in making the land productive, comparable to surrounding land.

Our concerns with the North Road Gravel Pit were noise during migration and nesting at Fruitgrowers Reservoir, disturbance of cranes during their migratory stopover at the reservoir, increased traffic on the causeway, and safety of birders visiting Fruitgrowers Reservoir that use the causeway throughout the year. We were also concerned that following reclamation, after cessation of gravel mining, sale of the land might result in it being developed for housing, which would eliminate the parcel as wildlife habitat and increase traffic across the causeway at Fruitgrowers Reservoir. Taking our concerns into consideration, the County has proposed the following as mitigation:

- ❖ The County shall reduce the speed limit on North Road at Fruitgrowers Reservoir from 45 to 35 mph.
- ❖ The County shall prohibit the use of Jake brakes on County vehicles on North Road at Fruitgrowers Reservoir.
- ❖ The County shall install advisory signage on North Road warning of pedestrian traffic.
- ❖ The County shall limit crushing activities at the gravel pit so as not to occur during the period of March 15 thru May 15, except under extraordinary circumstances.
- ❖ The County shall reclaim the gravel pit after mining activities cease to a rangeland environment suitable for wildlife and bird habitat.
- ❖ The County shall construct and maintain a parking area with a bird watching site off North Road adjacent to Fruitgrowers Reservoir, with the approval of appropriate agencies.
- ❖ The County shall place a deed restriction on the gravel pit parcels that will place them in a conservation easement after gravel pit operations cease and prior to any change of ownership.

Proposed parking and viewing area concept layout.

Eckert Crane Days Approaching

March 21-23, 2014

Mark your calendars for the 2014 Eckert Crane Days, scheduled for Friday through Sunday, March 21-23, 2014. BCAS is sponsoring the event and will be looking for volunteers to help set up and to share their spotting scopes and expertise with members of the public who come to see the sandhill cranes. Please contact Alan or Susan Reed at 970-249-1076 or alan_reed@bresnan.net if you are interested in helping with Crane Days.

Foxden Farm Sunflower Seed at Montrose Farmers Market

For the past year, Jim Heneghan, owner of Foxden Farm in Olathe, Colorado, has offered 5 lb. bags of Certified Organic black oil sunflower seeds for \$7.50 per bag at the Montrose Farmers Market. We meant to get word out on this earlier, but somehow the notification never made it into the earlier newsletters.

Although the outdoor summer Farmers Market is over for the season, their sunflower seeds will be available at the winter Farmers Market beginning in January at 514 S. 1st Street indoors in the back of the Straw Hat Kitchen Store from 10:00 am to 1:00 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month. The seeds are also available at Chow Down Pet Supplies at 202 W. Main in Montrose.

Jim is a bird lover, a past BCAS Board Member, and takes pride in sustainable agriculture. "By growing the sunflowers organically, birds find a haven at Fox Den Farm compared to a conventional farm," Jim says. "After harvesting the seeds, we leave the stalks of the sunflower plants standing. This provides vital winter habitat for the birds. It's important to me that birds find shelter in our fields and avoid exposure to harmful chemicals. I want to be as environmentally friendly as I can. By donating \$1.50 per bag to the Black Canyon Audubon Society, I feel that I can help give back for all the wonderful things that they do."

If you are unable to make it to the market or Chow Down Pet Supplies, you can also place orders online at: <https://www.localfoodmarketplace.com/montrose/products.aspx?s=111>.

Larger quantity bags are available and a \$0.30 per pound donation is made with each purchase too! For more information about Foxden Farm visit their website at www.foxdenfarmorganics.com. With prime bird feeding season upon us, this is a great way to

provide birds with Certified Organic seeds and support local businesses and BCAS.



Volunteer Opportunity

San Miguel Basin Gunnison Sage-grouse Working Group

The San Miguel Basin Gunnison Sage-grouse Working Group is looking for a volunteer to fill the vacancy left by Barbara Hawke, who recently moved to Tucson to be the Executive Director of the Arizona Wilderness Coalition. Leigh Robertson, Director of the Working Group says, "We'd love to have a BCAS member fill her shoes. What's involved is participation in a monthly conference call (usually 30–60 minutes long), and participation in Working Group meetings and field trips, if possible (usually 3 total per year)." Someone in the San Miguel, Ouray, or Montrose county areas would be ideal. If interested, contact Leigh at: (970) 316-1650 or leighrobertson3@gmail.com. For more information about the working group, see www.sanmiguelgrouse.org



Website Update

Conversion to Joomla! Underway

We have made considerable strides in getting our website to become active again. Yvonne McChesney of At Your Service Internet Solutions, LLC of Montrose is converting our website to a more user-friendly platform. We think that a website should be a primary source of information to both our membership and to visitors who are interested in the birds of our area. The conversion will maintain the current look and layout of our current website, but will have flexibility for easy modifications as we update it and decide on new content. If you have an interest in helping BCAS with the website, now would be an ideal time to speak up because part of the conversion will be training in how to update and maintain the site. It could also be a creative outlet for someone with ideas that they would like to see made reality.

National Audubon Members: **We Want Your Email Address**

This edition of the newsletter will be sent by U.S. mail to about 220 people at considerable expense. We would like to change that. If you are a local BCAS Member, you are more likely to receive the newsletter by email, but if you are a National Audubon Society (NAS) member, perhaps you have been surprised to see *Canyon Wrenderings* in your mailbox. The way this works is that the NAS assigns their members to local chapters when they are available by zip code. We then receive a list of NAS subscribers in our area and feel an obligation to include them in our mailing of this newsletter. Perhaps you like getting the newsletter, perhaps not—we don't know—but we keep sending it. We get a small amount of compensation for the NAS members in our area, but the cost of four newsletters per year far outweighs that compensation. So, if you are receiving this newsletter by mail, please consider sending us your email address so that you can receive it electronically. Here are the benefits:

- You will receive the newsletter in color.
- You will be reducing the amount of paper we use.
- You will reduce the amount of postage BCAS pays for mailings so that money can be put to other uses.
- You will reduce the cost BCAS pays in printing and the time spent preparing newsletters for mailing.
- We periodically send email announcements of field trips, speakers, or other information on short notice and you will be on the list to hear about those great activities so you can take part.
- We will not share your email, so you will not receive spam through us.
- You will be a jet-setter and very cool!



This is you after signing up for email delivery of the BCAS Newsletter. Send an email to Rich Stafford at megrich@montrose.net

The transformation will be immediate.



Black Canyon Audubon Society
P.O. Box 387
Delta, CO 81416



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Please recycle*

Your expiration date is shown on your mailing label. BCAS on the label means you are a local member only. Labels with an ID number indicate national membership. If your membership has expired, please renew using the form at right. National renewals should follow the instructions at the bottom of the form.

Black Canyon Audubon Society (NAS chapter C9ZD140Z)
Membership Renewal and Application Form

Members may participate in all chapter activities, receive the *Canyon Wrenderings* newsletter and vote on chapter issues. Annual local membership dues are \$10 if newsletter is received electronically, \$15 if newsletter is mailed. Dues remain locally.

(Check one) Renewal (see mailing label for expiration date) _____
New Member _____

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone (optional): _____

Enc: _____ \$10 for email newsletter.

Email address: _____

_____ \$15 for U.S. mail/print subscribers.

Mail your renewal to:

Black Canyon Audubon Society, PO Box 387, Delta, CO 81416.

If you would like to join or donate to National Audubon Society and receive Audubon magazine, please send a check for \$20 to National Audubon Society, P.O. Box 422250, Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250. Please use this form and list Black Canyon Audubon Society/C2ZD140Z on your check so that BCAS can receive membership recruitment funds.